

Even in the year 2009, we see religious intolerance and ignorance exhibited both internationally and at home. I have worked with Central New Jersey religious leaders to promote inter-religious dialogue and the development of mutual respect and understanding. For example, we can identify commonalities and shared values of the three Abrahamic religions and traditions – Christianity, Islam, and Judaism – and present the differences among these three so they can be appreciated and discussed with mutual respect.

As a result of our discussions, interfaith groups have created a [“Three Faiths Walk”](#) in Mercer, Middlesex, and Monmouth Counties to promote learning, understanding, and respect. The Middlesex walk (actually a bus ride among places of worship) has taken place and was a [great success](#).

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[Mercer walk](#)

on Sunday, May 31 will begin at 1:30 p.m. at the Trinity Cathedral, located at 801 West State Street in Trenton. The Monmouth walk on Sunday, June 14 will begin at 12:30 p.m. at the Islamic Society of Monmouth County, located at Red Hill Road in Middletown. For more information on the Mercer walk, call 609-924-5022. For more information on the Monmouth walk, call 732-531-6200 ext. 216.

My Visit to an Innovative School District

Always interested in finding practices that improve children's education, I visited this week an elementary and a middle school in Union City, New Jersey to learn more about the innovations the school district has used to increase student achievement. By periodically evaluating all students and sharing those test data immediately with teachers, they are able to tailor instruction within a few days of the assessments to meet each student's individual needs. Data also show teachers and administrators important trends that can be addressed systematically.

Tests are integrated with the curriculum and are seen as teaching tools rather than disruptions for teachers or ordeals and punishment for students. Combined with a detailed data system and frequent teacher consultation, this approach helps the students do far better than they previously had.

The House Committee on Education and Labor, of which I am a member, has begun the process to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (replacing No Child Left Behind) over the next year. Whether you are a student, teacher, parent, or grandparent I would appreciate learning your thoughts on education reform.

Legislative Update: Credit Cardholders Bill of Rights

Last week, President Obama signed into law the [Credit Cardholders' Bill of Rights Act](#), about which I have previously [written](#)

. This law will provide important protections for consumers. I only wish the law's provisions would go into effect sooner than the nine months required.

Thinking About Sustainable Energy

Our nation is overly dependent on fossil fuels. As we work to develop long-term strategy to decrease our dependence on foreign oil and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, I am starting a series that examines the facts regarding energy issues that Congress is likely to encounter. This week's topic is farmland soils.

As concerns about global climate change intensify, one attractive option to reduce the release of carbon greenhouse gases to the atmosphere is by increasing the amount of carbon stored in farmland soils, as this has the potential to immediately [offset 5 to 15 percent](#)

The amount of carbon stored in soils can be increased through advanced farming techniques, such as changing cropping systems or changing to no-till farming, and through land management, such as converting farmland back into forests or grasslands. As only [40 percent of U.S. planted areas](#)

use conservation tillage practices, there are substantial opportunities for improvement. I have advocated for increased funding for the

[National Resources Conservation Service](#)

to provide technical assistance and training to New Jersey farmers to integrate successfully soil carbon sequestration practices into their farm operations. The

[2008 Farm Bill](#)

expands existing conservation programs to encourage more farmers to adopt these advanced techniques. I voted for this law and hope its implementation will increase the amount of carbon stored in agricultural lands. However, much more research is needed. Questions need to be answered, such as what kinds of roots or what soil bacteria, fungi, and insects are most beneficial for building carbon-rich soils, and how deeply and how quickly can topsoil be built?

Click

[here](#)

for more background and

[here](#)

for further reading. of U.S. emissions while at the same time improving soil quality. Because this can be done immediately, it would allow time for other technologies to be developed and deployed.

Sincerely,

RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress

P.S. Just a reminder: I always want to hear from you, but please don't reply to this e-mail. Instead, please email me through my website at www.holt.house.gov , or call me at 1-87-RUSH-HOLT (1-877-874-4658) to let me know what's on your mind. Please also note that you may unsubscribe from this list by clicking on the "unsubscribe" link at the bottom of this email.